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Citation for final published version:

Jennings, George 2019. Bruce Lee and the Invention of Jeet Kune Do: The Theory of Martial Creation. *Martial Arts Studies* (8) , pp. 60-72.
10.18573/mas.84 file

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18573/mas.84>
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.18573/mas.84>>

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BRUCE LEE AND THE INVENTION OF JEET KUNE DO: THE THEORY OF MARTIAL CREATION GEORGE JENNINGS

DOI

10.18573/mas.84

KEYWORDS

Bruce Lee, invention, creation,
founder, theory

CITATION

Jennings, George. 2019. 'Bruce Lee and the Invention of Jeet Kune Do: The Theory of Martial Creation'. *Martial Arts Studies* 8, 60-72.
doi.org/10.18573/mas.84

ABSTRACT

This article argues that creativity in martial arts can be linked to moments of crisis. It does so on the basis of a comparative analysis of Bruce Lee's martial artistry – specifically, his creation of jeet kune do – in relation to the earlier development of bartitsu and the more recent example of xilam. All three of these arts were founded by experienced practitioners who took personal and social crises as stimulus for creativity. Lee's own crises can be understood as: (i) Separation, in terms of his geographical distance from his wing chun kung fu school; (ii) Fitness, in terms of his dissatisfaction with his physical condition following a now (in)famous duel; and (iii) Injury, in terms of the injury he suffered to his lower back in 1971, which resulted in chronic back pain for the remainder of his life but which also allowed for the technical, supplementary and philosophical basis for his personal way towards combative excellence and overall human development. On the basis of comparing these three cases, I propose a theory of martial creation, which I invite other martial arts studies scholars to test and explore further.

THEORISING BRUCE LEE

There are numerous ways of theorising and philosophising Bruce Lee as a person, cultural icon and household name. Some include using poststructuralist frameworks derived from thinkers like Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida [see Bowman 2010, 2013, 2017a]. Others derive from studies of masculinity [see Chan 2000]. One might also draw from a range of social theories, such as those of Pierre Bourdieu which inspired the *Fighting Scholars* collection [Sánchez García and Spencer 2013]. Other approaches are available, relating to the phenomenology of the body (and senses) using the likes of Maurice Merleau-Ponty [see Spencer 2012] or historically-sensitive work developed from Norbert Elias [see Ryan 2017]. Furthermore, classical social theory and other forms of philosophy could also be used to understand him as a writer and thinker of the martial arts, whether in terms of class, ritual, or charisma, using Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim or Max Weber, and so on [see Law 2010].

It is important to acknowledge that all of these theoretical avenues provide powerful and specialised lenses with which to view any subject in terms of society, power and knowledge. This is why they have been applied extensively in fields such as the sociology of sport, as evidenced by numerous textbooks centring on such approaches [cf. Guillianotti 2004; Jarvie 2006]. Studies using such approaches could make important contributions to the surprisingly sparse academic literature on Bruce Lee, his art and his legacy. However, in this article, my aim is somewhat different. It is not merely to test and apply well-known social, political and cultural theories to the fighting arts, but rather to try to develop a new theory from them.

There are, for example, theories of physical culture that have developed from and for the study of sport and physical activity, such as Henning Eichberg's [1998] body cultures (which I have tried to apply directly to martial arts [Jennings 2018a]). And martial arts studies, as a field in its own right, should not hesitate to develop its own theories that can combine and contrast with pre-existing scholarship, such as that which is used in sport, physical culture, leisure studies, history, and political science, among a host of cognate disciplines and fields of inquiry. This theory can be gradually developed as Grounded Theory [Glaser and Strauss 2017], building and testing theory with numerous examples, and responding to suggestions and critiques from peers and critical interlocutors.

As an example of such a theoretical endeavour, this article aims to explore the legacy of Bruce Lee as a martial artist, and, in particular, as a creator, founder, and pioneer of his own martial art, jeet kune do, in 1960s California. My effort is a response to recent calls for theory (as

opposed to stringent definitions and taxonomies) in martial arts studies in this very journal [Bowman 2017b]. Consequently, I shall examine the circumstances that stimulated the vision, creation and continued shaping of this art from its embryonic form as Jun Fan gung fu in Seattle (a term that merely means 'Jun Fan's [i.e. Bruce Lee's] Kung Fu Club') through to the art of jeet kune do that Lee left to his final students before his untimely death.

I take Lee as the principal case study, but my discussion is supplemented and supported by that of two other founders of 20th century martial arts. First, the Victorian-Edwardian British engineer Edward W. Barton-Wright, who created the hybrid self-defence art and physical culture of bartitsu in London between 1898 and 1902. Second, the Mexican martial artist Marisela Ugalde, who developed the paradoxically or anachronistically 'pre-Hispanic' philosophical martial art of xilam in the 1990s, and who still leads the development of the art from its base in the State of Mexico and Mexico City today.

Using this comparative approach, I draw out similar features and other links between the personal and the social, as well as the habitus, and the forms of crisis and creativity that helped and perhaps even forced such practitioners to found their own fighting systems. This constitutes the ground of a new theory of creation and creativity in martial arts. Like almost all theories (and martial arts for that matter), it is inspired by some pre-existing frameworks. So here, I have consciously drawn from *The Sociological Imagination* [Mills 1959] and writings on pragmatism, such as those seen in *Changing Bodies: Habit, Crisis and Creativity* [Shilling 2008]. Before moving on to the chief case study and supportive exemplars that help to build and test my theory, I will explain these sociological and philosophical influences and why they have been incorporated.

Pragmatism seems relevant in relation to jeet kune do because jeet kune do purports to value pragmatism over all else. Put simply, it is a hybrid fighting system based on combat efficiency and street survival, as well as specific technical concepts such as broken rhythm.¹ It is practical and arguably pragmatic, even if Lee is not widely considered a pragmatic *philosopher*. Nonetheless, since Lee's death in 1973, there have been many developments and applications of jeet kune do, in all manner of surprising contexts. For instance, Lee Seng Khoo and Vasco Senna-Fernandes [2014] have actually called for the application of the jeet kune do combat philosophy to the somewhat unexpected realm of plastic and reconstructive surgery. They state: 'Bruce Lee disposed [of] ideals within a style adopting a flexible approach to seek what works'

1 For more on the concept of broken rhythm, see Colin McGuire's contribution to this special issue.

[22]. They conclude: 'Efficiency, directness and simplicity are the hallmark[s] of Jeet Kune Do' [23].

But, in contemporary Western philosophical contexts, some emerging scholars are starting to perceive Bruce Lee as a pragmatic philosopher. For instance, A.D. Miller writes: 'Lee's Jeet Kune Do method of martial arts development represents both his philosophical and martial arts concerns regarding how we can understand reality through functional success within an environment' [2015: 7]. And in this very issue, Kyle Barrowman demonstrates the probative value of understanding Lee's combative philosophy as aligned with something akin to a pragmatic ethos.

Elsewhere, in the People's Republic of China, wushu scholars are also starting to examine Bruce Lee, seeing jeet kune do as something to learn from in the modern Chinese martial arts, specifically as a model for sports development [Li and Ren 2010; Hao, Zhang and Luo 2011; Huizin 2011]. For Li [2010], the course of jeet kune do can be understood in four stages: (i) The Chinese and Western cultural environments; (ii) The influence of Chinese and Western philosophies; (iii) The social background of the time; and (iv) Bruce Lee's own knowledge. Others, such as Li and Wang [2010] in the same special edition on jeet kune do, contend that the art actually needs to keep updated with the perspective of sports development in terms of 'body fitness', 'body defence' and 'body essence'. (Some of these ideas are relevant to this article on how jeet kune do developed, although we in an increasingly global martial arts studies might benefit from bilingual Mandarin and English discussions in order to develop a more global perspective).

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY THEORY

Theories come in and out of fashion, and, as mentioned, they are rarely totally 'new'. Instead, theories tend to be built upon pre-existing theoretical frameworks and concepts. New theories are sometimes created to update old ones, while others combine two or more approaches, often from different disciplines. I have selected two simple yet profound frameworks that I believe can combine to form a new theory of creation for martial arts studies.

One theory, *the sociological imagination*, deals with social themes and is critical of economic, financial and political themes that can relate to martial arts practice, teaching and development. The other approach, *pragmatism*, is more concerned with physicality, with direct experience and creativity surrounding regular life and the crises that can emerge from it. Taken together, these provide a powerful framework for understanding how and why a person might create a new martial arts

system, while considering that these systems are never totally new (just like theory), but make use of previously existing martial arts styles, principles, techniques and methods.

Personal Troubles and Social Issues

Following the traditions of interpretivist sociology, one can turn to the lives of individuals to study society. Personal problems are never purely an issue faced by individuals, as they are driven by social forces and long-term processes. Likewise, social issues always lead to personal experience and potential troubles. This is the simple premise that American sociologist C. Wright Mills [1959] devised in his widely celebrated text *The Sociological Imagination*.

For Mills, the sociological imagination is the ability to perceive personal problems (such as poverty, unemployment, disability) as more than the problems of an individual's life, biography and physicality, but something socially constructed and reproduced by cultural, economic, social and political spheres of life in general. An interpretivist sociologist inspired by the earlier efforts of Weber (one of the founders of sociology), Mills was interested in the meanings behind people's lives and their in-depth experiences. In this seminal text, Mills calls for a detailed biographical and historical exploration of people's lives and the consideration of rich case studies of individuals. He asked how they were shaped by the history of their time and what we can learn about society from their actions. In terms of martial arts, such individuals *qua* rich case studies would include the pioneers of new approaches to martial arts. For the purpose of understanding the founders of martial arts like Bruce Lee in a sociological way, Mills' framework offers a perspective that situates the individual in terms of their social environment, and vice versa, with neither one in isolation.

We know enough of the events in Bruce Lee's life (from a range of more or less reliable biographical sources) to infer much of what drove him to form jeet kune do. Any number of unique or contextually predictable things about his origin, ethnicity, social class, family, upbringing, life and times can either be approached in sociological terms (such as class, gender, ethnicity or more contemporary academic concerns, including postcolonialism, sexuality and the body/embodiment), or in terms of his individual psychology or unique biography, or indeed, as I am suggesting, via combinations of the above.

In any approach, it seems important to bear in mind the often documented claim that Lee's teacher, Grandmaster Ip Man, received complaints from Lee's classmates about teaching someone (viz. Lee) of mixed ethnicity; and also that when he left Hong Kong for the US, Lee was not formally qualified to teach the art of wing chun, still never

having learned the second part of the dummy form or the formal weapons styles of the system [Thomas 1996].

When he moved to the US, Lee did teach his early students wing chun kung fu, as seen in Lee's student James Lee's [1972] book, which contains a foreword from his *sifu*. But for both biographical and sociological reasons, in retrospect it is unlikely that Lee would have remained satisfied teaching only wing chun. Personal biography, character, creativity, restlessness and social context all seem to intervene, and help to explain the formation of jeet kune do.

From the ages of 18 to 30, Lee lived in more liberal parts of the US during a period of great social movements, such as the hippy movement that spread from California, and specifically San Francisco, Lee's birthplace. As Daniele Bolelli [2003] pointed out, it is difficult to imagine Lee creating jeet kune do in 1950s Texas. Lee openly taught men and women of different ethnic backgrounds, and he later had access to celebrity and Hollywood students who were interested in a practical form of self-defence as well as a longstanding interest in Eastern philosophy. Lee's only published book, *Chinese Gung Fu: Philosophical Art of Self-Defence* [1963], promoted Jun Fan gung fu as being steeped in Daoist wisdom, and his later article in *Black Belt*, 'Liberate Yourself from Classical Karate' [Lee 1971], continued such prose. His private schooling, eventual strong grasp of the English language and his university education (including a mixture of drama and philosophy) enhanced his already charismatic persona. This ability to use the voice, gestures and other bodily aspects of the person lead me to the next element of the theory: pragmatism.

Pragmatism and the Body

The sociology of the body is an established area of social science that often considers social theory in terms of the embodied nature of human life. From the early efforts of Brian S. Turner [1984], much of this makes use of philosophers such as Foucault and Merleau-Ponty, along with sociologists from other traditions. Recently, as a fresh revelation from his earlier work following this convention [Shilling 2012], the noted sociologist of the body Chris Shilling [2008] has called for renewed interest in and application of the American pragmatist tradition that was developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries along with the concept of body pedagogics [Shilling 2017].

Pragmatism, as the name suggests, is concerned with the everyday lives and struggles of human beings and how they overcome problems through ingenuity and creative endeavours. Its chief thinkers include Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and, most importantly for Shilling, John Dewey, who Shilling has cited and promoted above all

others. In *Changing Bodies*, Shilling outlines his theory of how humans can change according to their social and physical environments. He uses various case studies, including taijiquan, to show the ingenuity of human beings in overcoming obstacles (whether physical, symbolic or imaginary). However, humans first develop certain habits over years of regular practice. Then, with certain political, social and personal circumstances, a moment of crisis can arise. This might be losing a job, imprisonment for political reasons, or an injury through the very practice that was shaping the body. People can continue to dwell in this crisis, find creative ways in which to live with it, or overcome it. This leads to the third stage of creativity – a stage connected with the theory of creation.

Using Lee as our central example, we can see the clear development of habits: ways of moving through footwork, holding the guard, striking, blocking and parrying, etc. These were grounded in wing chun kung fu, but with the distance from his teacher caused by moving from Hong Kong to the US, along with his education, Lee would meet and train with other martial artists and read voraciously about diverse arts, such as boxing and fencing. (Writers and instructors such as Teri Tom [2010] claim that Lee's investment in boxing and fencing principles while in the US means that jeet kune do should essentially be regarded as a Western martial art based around one concept, the straight lead [Tom 2012].)

In terms of any interest in maintaining fidelity to the wing chun tradition he was part of, Lee had the practical problem of distance and time: he could not visit Ip Man on a regular basis in order to 'complete' the wing chun system, and there was no technology with which to learn at a distance. He did, however, have the gifts of speed, an athletic physique and a creative imagination to overcome these barriers.

In this regard, it seems that the legendary/mythic fight with Wong Jack Man in 1965 played a decisive role, forcing Lee to revise everything and turn Jun Fan gung fu, which was based almost exclusively on the Chinese martial arts, into a hybrid martial art that involved modern methods of sparring and supplementary fitness regimes.² As is well-known, Lee reportedly won the fight but not in the manner or with the ease that he had expected. Exhausted after the encounter, Lee started to modify his practices, which generated a revised art and arguably also a renewed body, producing an aerobically fit physicality fortified by a new strength and conditioning regimen, a strict diet and daily stretching [Little 1997].

2 For more on Lee's fight with Wong Jack Man beyond the scope of this essay, see Bowman [2017a] and Polly [2018].

Shilling [2008] has avoided using the word *habitus*, a concept central to the theories of Bourdieu and Elias. *Habit* works well with a phenomenological understanding of Merleau-Ponty or techniques of the body of Mauss. Yet *habitus* – a link between the personal and the social – is a key concept in martial arts studies, as has been explored in many studies in physical culture, such as the aforementioned *Fighting Scholars* collection and recent studies of capoeira [see Delamont, Stephens & Campos 2017]. Morgan, Brown and Aldous [2017] have explored the possibility of uniting Bourdieu with Shilling's approach to pragmatism from a similar vantage point. With these arguments in mind, I use the term *habit(us)* to focus on the socially constructed and individually embodied sets of habits that are open to change through pedagogy. This and other key components of the theory are examined below.

THE THEORY OF MARTIAL CREATION

I have now outlined the two main points of reference for the theory of martial creation. One theory [from Mills 1959] shows how the personal and the social are inseparable, and therefore interconnected. The other [from Shilling 2008] demonstrates a process of change from regular habits to a potential crisis (when the personal and social connections change or rupture) and the eventual or possible creativity which can in turn feed into renewed and revised habits. This can be mapped as in Figure 1 below.

The diagram shows the potential flow from *habit(us)* to changing circumstances. The right circle, the social, includes economic forces, financial situations, political scenarios and sociocultural themes. The left, the personal, shows the mind-body-emotion nexus that is the human being, the 'inner you' that merges with the social to form the *habitus*. Habits are taught, learned, and refined in social settings, and are passed on from generation to generation. In martial arts, the *habit* is the long-term disposition towards continued practice of specific practices (such as punches or forms) that form the *habitus* of the art. With the variety of subjective and objective scenarios, the practitioners originally aim for exceeding pre-existing frameworks of principles, techniques (of the body) and the methods to achieve them. Techniques are repeated over the years, with training aids and alongside fellow martial artists also striving to cultivate this *habitus*.

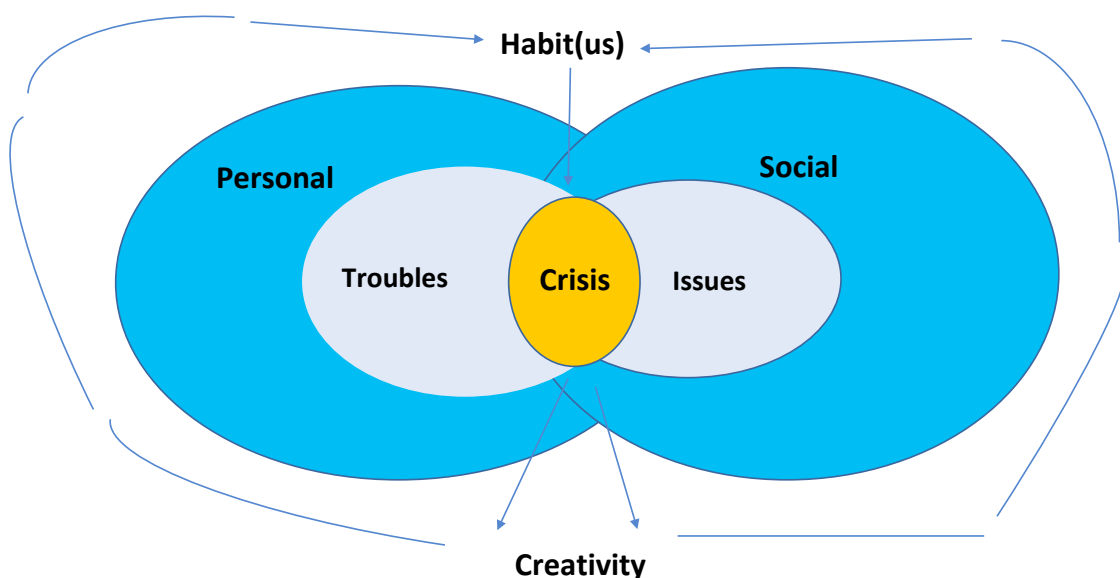


Figure 1. A Theory of Martial Creation

The crises can be psychophysical, political, economic and/or social. For martial artists, this is caused when their art can no longer be practiced as before due to a clash between the personal and social realms of life. In Lee's case, his system was founded following a disappointing physical conflict with another martial artist. It was also created in the US, where Lee was unable to see either his teacher Ip Man or his seniors on a regular basis. Lee could not continue on his journey through the wing chun system, and so invented his own solutions to problems.

Creativity comes in the guise of new or revised forms, additional training methods, revised terminology and mechanisms, or even a new philosophical framework. Jeet kune do expresses this through its extensive supplementary training, mixed repertoire of techniques and hybrid Taoist and pragmatic philosophy. In other words, Lee acted pragmatically, therefore the philosophical (and social scientific) tradition of pragmatism seems an appropriate framework with which to understand his engagement with, and disengagement from, martial arts tradition.

The interrelated dimensions of the personal and the social, along with the three main stages, leads us to six precise dimensions. I believe these are some of the crucial dimensions that founders of martial arts can be seen to have possessed and hence constitute dimensions that will be present for all who create fighting systems:

1. Founders must have a background as *practitioners* in one or more martial art(s).
2. They must achieve a level of *competence, confidence* and *charisma* in order to gather a following.
3. Yet, they will *not* be the top students, official gatekeepers, or lineage holders of their original system.
4. They must identify a *problem* or face a personal, political or social *crisis* that aggrieves them.
5. They will then devise a *solution* through a revised fighting, human development and training system.
6. Their passing (whether expected or unexpected) can create added *chaos*, thus fuelling the cycle of *creativity* among future generations of practitioners.

To illustrate this explicitly via Bruce Lee:

1. Lee had a background in wing chun kung fu, a brief spell with hung kuen, and various experiences with judo, karate, kali and taekwondo via students, contacts and acquaintances. The base in one martial art gave him detailed experiential knowledge, while his experiences with the other martial arts provided him with a variety of techniques and methods to train. He possessed a hybrid and ever-evolving martial arts habitus.
2. Lee was also an established actor and a drama and philosophy student who could perform in public or for private audiences with pleasure. He developed fighting, teaching and demonstration skills (and tricks) through years of practice under formal tutelage along with informal training and personal research.
3. Yet, he was neither recognised as a senior figure in Ip Man's Hong Kong school of wing chun nor as an elder in the Chinese martial arts community in the US. So, unlike his kung fu 'brothers', Wong Shun Leung and Chu Shong Tin, who remained in Hong Kong to complete the system, Lee left at an intermediate stage. He was thus never recognized as a top exponent of wing chun.
4. Lee experienced a physical crisis in the form of his subpar cardiovascular endurance and a second crisis years later in the form of a severe back injury. He was also faced with sociopolitical difficulties as man of mixed heritage. There were three clear stages in Lee's personal crisis: separation, fitness and injury. The major crisis first stemmed from Lee's separation from his wing chun school and the bodily lineage of knowledge for him to become a recognised sifu – or even 'indoor student' – to learn all aspects of the art from Ip Man. Ironically, Lee's continued focus on technique over fitness was another point of crisis in realising that he did not have the stamina to fight a trained opponent. Finally, the injury through the very training that he used to remedy his physical weaknesses led to a crisis of temporary immobility.
5. Through cross training and extensive reading/research, Lee was able to create the art and philosophy that he called jeet kune do. The lack of fitness and power led him to bolster his training regimen. The injury, which continued to hamper him for the remainder of his life, allowed him time to read more extensively and actually conceptualize and articulate the philosophical foundation of jeet kune do (published posthumously as *Tao of Jeet Kune Do*).

6. Now, nearly half a century since Lee's untimely death, there are different jeet kune do 'schools' or 'camps'. And, as his original students age and pass away, the diversification of jeet kune do continues. New generations teach, write and spread the art and different, 'new' arts and styles emerge in diverse and imaginative ways.

These six steps may seem contingent or cumbersome. However, they can be summarized in the following declaration: *A martial art is founded by a disciplined, habitual martial artist who creatively transcends personal and social crises.* After all, martial arts are *arts*, and their practitioners are *artists*. Like composers and painters, they need to learn the basics of an art (ideally within an interactive pedagogy and from a reputable teacher), they should be able to harness their tools and they must achieve a status in order to create something new and create a new method of achieving it. The overall process of creativity is a potentially lifelong process, but it also comes with fleeting and intensive moments of (sometimes epiphanous) creation.

In terms of its delimitation, this theory is primarily concerned with new, reinvented, reimagined martial arts systems, not styles of the same system such as branches of wing chun kung fu (although they will follow a similar pattern).

TESTING THE THEORY OF MARTIAL CREATION ADDITIONAL CASES

In order to justify, defend and delimit the theory, I shall now turn to two different martial arts, each selected on the basis of emerging evidence about their creation. The two martial artists and their arts that I have selected are Edward W. Barton-Wright's bartitsu and Marisela Ugalde's xilam. These are contrasting examples of two very different founders who, during stages of habit development as martial artists, created arts due to a combination of personal and social troubles manifesting in multiple crises.

Both cases are also the subjects of recent research projects in martial arts studies. Bartitsu is increasingly well-known in media, academia and popular culture. Xilam is not as well-known, but recent research into it has been published in this journal. On the one hand, the legacy of xilam's founder, Marisela Ugalde, is yet to be fully realised, as she is still an active instructor and promoter of her art and maintains xilam under one singular and legally registered organisation. On the other hand, the nearly-forgotten Barton-Wright's martial legacy is now being actively promoted by the Bartitsu Society, whose mission is 'preserving and extending the legacy of martial arts pioneer Edward Barton-Wright (1860-1951)' (www.bartitsu.org).

The historical work of Richard Bowen and practical projects of modern bartitsu enthusiasts such as Tony Wolf are compiled in two books on the technical aspects of the art [2006, 2010]. As with jeet kune do, the art has fragmented into groups identified by the Bartitsu Society: (i) Neo-bartitsu ('as it can be today') that extends and develops the original experiments and resulting canon and (ii) Canonical bartitsu ('as we know it was'). This is much like the status of jeet kune do with its two main branches: (i) jeet kune do *concepts* (i.e., open to revision) and (ii) jeet kune do *nucleus* (i.e., teaching what was taught as it was taught in the 1960s).

Edward W. Barton-Wright and Bartitsu

Bartitsu was founded by the British engineer and inventor Edward W. Barton-Wright, who coined, organised, promoted and taught the art between 1898 and 1902 in the Bartitsu School of Arms and Physical Culture in Soho, London. Like jeet kune do, the art was only formally taught under this name for several years. Its name is taken from Barton-Wright's own surname and the Japanese art of 'jūjitsu' (a Japanese term that today is regarded as more correctly rendered 'jūjutsu' but that is still often spelled 'jūjitsu').

Bartitsu (as the first available form of jūjutsu in London) evidently fascinated late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. London was a centre of art, finance and science (much as California would later be) but was also a class-divided and potentially dangerous city – the most populous in the world at the time. As Godfrey [2010] notes, this was the time of the Boer War and the hooligan scares of the 1890s, which led national moral panics, social fears, and personal anxieties to be united. As a practical and exotic form of self-defence, bartitsu attracted military men, the wealthy and even women. The reason for the widespread attraction relates to the social issue of poverty. Several decades after Marx's writings, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie were living very different material existences. This was the distinct social environment that Barton-Wright returned to after working as a railway engineer in Japan.

There is less biographic information on Barton-Wright than Bruce Lee (or Marisela Ugalde, who we will discuss next), and certainly no recorded audio or video interviews/footage; nevertheless, certain stages of his development are clear, and this helps in identifying the process of creating bartitsu. As an engineer, inventor and entrepreneur, exemplifying the heights of British ingenuity at the zenith (and feared decline) of the British Empire, Barton-Wright already had the habitus of a creative and industrious person.

He was also transcultural, having been born in India of mixed English and Scottish parentage, adding to the fact of his decade long stay in Japan, where he was one of the first Westerners to learn judo and jujutsu. It is important to note that he was not a prominent or senior judoka or jujutsuka, but certainly had a solid grasp of techniques – at least enough to impress onlookers and attract students. A film by the Bartitsu Society [2008] claims that Barton-Wright was the first Westerner to teach the Japanese martial arts and the first person to pioneer intercultural martial arts cross training and promote competitions between Japanese jujutsuka and Western wrestlers. He was also connected to the emergence of women's self-defence in advance of the Suffragette movement (and 'Suffrajitsu') – with Edith Garrud and others being among his students.

At times of personal troubles and senses of personal insecurity among the mobile upper-middle class and noble gentleman (and women) of late Victorian London, bartitsu provided a model for 'the new art of self-defence' as advertised in various magazines featuring its founder. This new art was connected to a revamped form of chivalry and masculine vigour at a time when the 'British' fight ethic was tied to fears about a declining British Empire [Godfrey 2010]. In Barton-Wright's own words, 'the system has been carefully and scientifically planned; its principle may be summed up in a sound knowledge of balance and leverage as applied to human anatomy' [Barton-Wright 1898]. One may see the scientific analysis of an engineer here.

There was also rampant fear of working-class muggers and gangs (often referred to as 'ruffians') who were regarded as out to thwart mobile gentleman of the time. In an article in *Pearson's Magazine*, Barton-Wright [1899] stressed the 300 methods of attack and counterattack against armed or unarmed opponents: 'It is quite unnecessary to try and get your opponent into any particular position, as the system embraces every possible eventuality and your defence and counter attack must be based upon the actions of your opponent'. There is also a tone of nationalism in his writing, with particularly critical views being expressed against the supposedly ineffectual French way of kicking, the mysterious Japanese, and general disparaging perceptions of potential violence from 'foreigners'. The non-academic website Full Contact Martial Arts has a rather academic synopsis that captures this well:

Bartitsu was geared specifically towards the problems of self-defence in an urban, industrialized society, at a time when many middle and upper class Londoners faced the threat of street gangsters. It was concomitant with a general feeling of insecurity both in England and among the traveling bourgeoisie of Europe, as well as with a public fascination with Asian (especially Japanese) culture.
[www.fullcontactmartialarts.org]

Along with concerns surrounding the softening of masculinity, bartitsu included physical culture expertise and specialist 'champions' who taught their own specialties in fighting: Swiss 'la canne' stick fighting and the closely related French savate, known for its kicking techniques (as taught by Pierre Vigny); English pugilism (the details on which are less documented); and most of all, Japanese *ko-ryu* jujutsu, taught by two Japanese fighters (Yukio Tani and Sadakazu Uyeneshi), which was accompanied by some Swiss wrestling known as *Svingen* (taught by Armand Cherpillord). These diverse fighting systems showed the conceptual design of bartitsu for combat experienced in four ranges (distance, striking, wrestling and grappling). It was an early model of mixed martial arts (*avant la lettre*), but one geared towards street self-defence, including the use of weapons or the defence against them.

There is much more that could be said about bartitsu in relation to jeet kune do, but, for the time being, the parallels sketched above will have to suffice. Now, I will turn to another, very different, case of martial creation: The case of xilam, which was developed a quarter of a century after jeet kune do and some ninety years after bartitsu, and neither in liberal California nor imperial Britain (which were each the most powerful regions in the world at the relevant times), but rather in postcolonial Mexico.

Marisela Ugalde and Xilam

Xilam is a notable example of an 'invented tradition' [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983]. (I have introduced it and explored key aspects of it before [Jennings 2016], as part of my emergent project using different methods and postcolonial theories [Jennings 2018b]). Xilam, which means 'to remove the skin' in the Mayan language, is a philosophically-rooted martial art inspired by the Mesoamerican civilisation underpinning Mexico. Significantly, it is a modern martial art developed in the early 1990s by a living and active founder. Even more significantly, it was founded by a living and active woman, Marisela Ugalde Velázquez de León, the self-proclaimed 'mother' of xilam, as a project based on fractured scientific philosophy and lost warrior culture [see Jennings 2015, 2016].

Like jeet kune do and bartitsu, xilam was created and spread from a large and highly influential conurbation: the metropolis of Mexico City, one of the world's largest settlements, where social inequality and personal security are important social and personal concerns for many. Mexico City is also a centre of culture, art and fashion, and is an ideal base for someone wishing to spread a national martial art. However, unlike bartitsu and jeet kune do, xilam is more of a social and national project than a project merely or primarily concerned with individual survival and self-protection. Instead, xilam is concerned with the social

issues of a national identity crisis, discrimination against indigenous people and their languages, violence against women, an ongoing war with the drug cartels, obesity and work-related stress. Sadly, Mexico is a 'leader' for many global issues of violence, as well as preventable diseases, with a developing economy, meaning long hours, often low salaries and limited chances for mobility.

Against this backdrop, the art did, nonetheless, begin with an individual. Marisela Ugalde began her career in the martial arts in her teens during the build-up to the 1968 Mexico City Games. This continued with her journey through karate, kung fu and kenpo, before she became interested in the little-known indigenous wrestling style of Zhuppaporrazo. Ugalde had the skills to fight with and without weapons, to roll and to break boards and even blocks of ice (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqMXsmOB85Y>).

As accounted for in Jennings [2015], this was a story of a Mexican woman training in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, a period when females could finally train in martial arts in Mexico. Ugalde experienced personal troubles as a female martial artist of her generation and earlier abuse from her brother-in-law and divorce from a husband less sympathetic to her dedication to the martial arts. She received black belts in numerous arts, but did not focus her efforts on one particular style as a lineage holder or champion athlete.

Furthermore, despite the discrimination against women at the time, she did not pursue an overtly feminist agenda in the martial arts. Instead, from her forged habits of regular training in Asian martial arts since her teenage years, she and her second husband perceived a clear crisis in the lack of a national martial art for a nation that was renowned for its precolonial warriors. Because of this, *silam* was born, later to be rendered *xilam*. Ugalde had extensive experience of public events thanks to an alliance with the Mexican sports chain Grupo Martí, and she remains eloquent in front of news reporters and journalists to this date – even hosting her own radio station *Platicando Con Marisela Ugalde*.

After the personal crisis of a split with her second husband due to an extramarital affair, Ugalde returned to Mexico City to follow the late shaman and Conchero dance leader Andrés Segura Granados, who she still regards as a spiritual mentor. She now had total creative autonomy over *xilam*, as her ex-husband, a Chinese-Mexican martial artist, returned to his own ethnic roots in the Chinese martial arts and his own family's system.

From Segura's philosophical teachings underpinned by Aztec (Nahua) metaphysics, *xilam* expresses creativity and *Mexicanidad* [Jennings

2017] via its forms, structure, terminology, designs and mantra. Like the Conchero or 'pre-Hispanic' dance (themselves reinvented traditions since the 1950s) and as a body culture [Eichberg 1998] it makes use of the design of the Mesoamerican calendar, indigenous language and native animals in its symbolic movements in space [Jennings 2018a]. Through its website [www.xilam.org] and other forms of social and print media, the art is promoted as a human development system as seen through its seven-staged structure claiming to enhance the aspects of consciousness, control, emotion and willpower that it says are unique to humans.

As Ugalde remains active as an instructor and promoter in her 60s, and with her daughter Mayra and other instructors following her approach, *Xilam* maintains its original course as a human development system and martial art inspired by Mesoamerican warriors, physical culture and philosophy. In decades to come, it will be interesting to see the potential shifts – particularly as the art seeks to internationalise following successful demonstrations and tours in China and visits from Korean political delegates. With martial arts and soft power being increasingly connected, *xilam* could even become one example of adoption and adaptation, as taijiquan has been elsewhere [see Mroz 2008]. This remains to be seen. But, having briefly set out the context and forces of the creation of this second comparison with jeet kune do, we may now turn to a concluding discussion of the proposed theory of martial creation.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS TESTING AND EXTENDING THE THEORY

There are many legacies that Bruce Lee has left behind: as an actor, writer, director, and so on. As created by Lee, jeet kune do is not only a martial art but also a unique philosophy. Added to which, jeet kune do was created in a social context of US racism, Chinese ethnocentric nationalism and kinship relationships in Chinese martial arts following lineage and family. It was also created due to Lee's (incomplete) status within wing chun, his troubles in combat (lack of endurance and power) and his debilitating back injury.

I have traced the development of jeet kune do along the lines of a theory of how and why a person might create a martial art. I offer this theory of martial creation as one of several theories that could be developed in martial arts studies. Other frameworks might include, for example, how fighting systems are taught and transmitted over time, the ways in which arts can be reinvented and reinterpreted, how they influence each other within the martial arts industry, and so on.

As part of this special issue on Bruce Lee's martial legacies, I could have focused exclusively on Bruce Lee and jeet kune do, but felt it beneficial to expand this focus and test the theory via a comparative analysis of two other 20th century martial arts from two very different periods and places: Bartitsu in Victorian/Edwardian London and xilam in contemporary Mexico. Other historical periods could also be explored according to this theoretical paradigm, whether older or newer – study of even more recent martial arts developed in the 21st century could involve ethnographic and media as well as biographical, historical and sociological research methods.

The creation of bartitsu and xilam (and, I argue, other modern martial arts) highlight the blend between the personal and the social, as well as the three stages of habit(us), crisis and creativity. They, like jeet kune do, demonstrate that a martial art is founded by a disciplined, habitual martial artist who becomes creative during a combination of personal and social crises. A martial art is thus neither a purely individual endeavour nor a social imposition, but a unification of individual experience with historical struggles.

The theory of the sociological imagination of Mills [1959] and the revisiting of pragmatism by Shilling [2008] enabled me to formulate this argument. This was followed by a subject-specific and careful six-pronged analysis of the necessary dimensions to the development of a martial art, from the individual founder and their embodied experiences to their eventual passing away and the further development or disappearance of the art. In this way, martial arts can be seen as a form of 'body pedagogics' [Shilling 2017] in which we can learn from our personal, physical and social environments and react in new and varied ways.

The hope underpinning this project is that other scholars might find this theory useful to explore, test, verify, qualify, modify or develop. The incorporation of other contemporary theoretical concepts might make it more robust. But the theory of martial creation already seems robust and aligned with pertinent directions of contemporary research. It certainly reminds us that human beings are relational [Crossley 2017] – always relating to issues, problems, real people, past founders, future generations and potential adversaries.

It is important to note that these foundational individuals never achieved things alone. Barton-Wright needed Vigny for his stick fighting techniques and also Japanese jujutsu practitioners. Marisela Ugalde originally formed the embryonic technical system with her second husband, a kung fu teacher. Bruce Lee worked with many other martial artists who have upheld the name of jeet kune do. Based on this dynamic social reality, two or more people might co-found a martial

art together. As martial arts ethnographer Lorenzo Domaneschi [2016] reminds us, the role of materials – weapons, pads, dummies, and other technological supplements – is also important beyond that of people and their bodies. Bartitsu has its walking stick and umbrella techniques and xilam is invested in its revival of Mesoamerican weaponry. The body is still key here, of course, as it is through the body that we harness habit(us), experience crises and nurture creativity in the martial arts. But it is also other bodies, people, objects and other aspects of social life that allow or induce us to create.

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Cardiff University Press
Gwasg Prifysgol Caerdydd

Martial Arts Studies is an imprint of Cardiff University Press, an innovative open-access publisher of academic research, where 'open-access' means free for both readers and writers.
cardiffuniversitypress.org

Journal DOI

10.18573/ISSN.2057-5696

Issue DOI

10.18573/mas.i8

Accepted for publication 30 June 2019

Martial Arts Studies

Journal design by Hugh Griffiths

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